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EPISCOPAL CHURCH CENTER • 815 SECOND AVENUE • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017

H. Boyd, Press Officer
New Dearnaley, Assistant Press Officer

Telephone: (212) 867-8400

80383

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BRENNER WINS LEIDT REPORTING AWARD

NEW YORK -- Betty Brenner, veteran religion correspondent for the Flint (Mich.) Journal, has been awarded the 1979 William E. Leidt Award for Excellence in religious news reporting.

Brenner was cited for a six-part series that examined the development and influence of the black religious community. Her work was the unanimous first-place choice of the judges, one of whom commented: "She handles a sensitive subject with sympathy and understanding. . . . I commend her for presenting a positive picture of the Black Church today, with a hopeful and realistic look at the Black Church of the future."

The award -- which includes a \$100 honorarium -- is given by the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church to encourage the editorial treatment of religion as legitimate news. It was established in memory of a longtime church communication specialist. Recent winners have included John Dart of the Los Angeles Times and George Cornell of the Associated Press.

The runner-up in the 1979 contest was Mary Ann Pikrone of the Richmond (Virginia) New Leader whose series "Jesus: God, Man or Both?" was hailed by judges as "an insightful, thoughtful work based on solid research."

The contest has become increasingly popular as more and more news papers and magazines pay greater attention to the topic, and Press Officer Walter H. Boyd, -- who administers the process -- notes that this has dictated some changes. "We've been extremely fortunate in that the judging has always been very conscientious and has always produced a winner of indisputably high calibre. But if we are to be faithful to the Council mandate of encouraging this trend, we need to develop ways in which papers and journals and wire services with vastly different needs, resources and audiences aren't forced to compete with one another directly."

He said that his office was studying the matter and hoped to present a proposal to the Executive Council soon.

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